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Daily Highlights

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FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General reports to Security Council on his recent visits to United Kingdom, France, Romania, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia and Moldova, and subsequent meetings in Geneva; says cooperation between United Nations and NATO is excellent.

+ Former Rwandan leaders must be removed from camps in Zaire to assure safety of returning refugees, Rwanda tells Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Committee; Haiti calls for international assistance programmes to reinforce its democracy.

+ Heavy fighting continues in Bihac pocket in Bosnia and Herzegovina; Serb forces reportedly massing at border in neighbouring Croatia.

+ Pledges worth $154 million announced for UNHCR programmes in 1995; General Assembly President says agency needs $1 billion.

+ IAEA Board of Governors authorizes secretariat to proceed with inspection tasks in Democratic People's Republic of Korea, as requested by Security Council.

+ Guatemalan Government and URNG, meeting in Mexico, discuss identity and rights of indigenous peoples; stress commitment to achieving agreement for firm and lasting peace in Guatemala.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today reported orally to the Security Council on his recent visits to the United Kingdom, France, Romania, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia and Moldova. He also reported on the results of his subsequent meetings in Geneva.

He later told correspondents that he had discussed the situation between Azerbaijan and Armenia with the Presidents of both countries during his two-week tour, and expressed the hope that it would be resolved peacefully.

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He had also held discussions on the Georgian/Abkhaz conflict, and noted that Special Envoy Edouard Brunner would chair a meeting in Geneva on 14 November with a view to accelerating the return of Georgian refugees.

While in Geneva, the Secretary-General had had a very long meeting with his Special Representatives for Rwanda and Burundi, Shahryar Khan and Ahmedou Ould Abdallah. They had focused on the problem of security in refugee camps and the difficulties confronting the United Nations, the importance of offering bilateral assistance to the Rwandan Government, and the need to encourage the return of refugees.

The Secretary-General had also discussed the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina with the Co-Chairman of the International Conference on the Former Yugoslavia, Thorvald Stoltenberg; Special Representative Yasushi Akashi; and the Force Commander of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR), General Bertrand de Sauville de Lapresle. He stressed that cooperation between the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) was excellent, based on the principles of the dual-key approach and the proportionality of air strikes. He added that he would receive the NATO Secretary-General at Headquarters in the coming days to discuss reinforcing the links between the two Organizations.

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Rwanda's former political and military leaders must be removed from camps in eastern Zaire to assure the safety of refugees returning home, the representative of Rwanda told the Third Committee (Social, Humanitarian and Cultural) yesterday. He said that the possible deployment of an international police force in the camps and the establishment of safer conditions in Rwanda would be crucial to the successful return of more than 2.2 million refugees. He made those comments as the Committee concluded its consideration of refugees and related issues.

The representative of Burundi called attention to the needs of the 580,000 people who had fled his country. Governments had a duty to provide those people with a reason to live, to hope and to rebuild their lives, he added. The representative of Haiti deplored the fact that repression and instability had forced hundreds of thousands of people to flee her country. Fortunately, hope had arisen since the return of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide to power. Now more than ever, the international community must resume assistance programmes to provide the Haitian people with a modicum of stability, without which democracy could not survive.

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Fighting continued in the Bihac pocket yesterday, and heavy shelling caused some civilian fatalities, according to a United Nations spokesman. Meanwhile, Serb troops were seen massing at the border in neighbouring Croatia.

There were reports that the Serbs were recruiting, and possibly conscripting, refugees from Bihac who had crossed into Croatia, the spokesman

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said. He added that such a development could jeopardize the work of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The Serb forces were also preventing the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) from supplying its peace-keepers in the area, leading to food shortages. Special Representative Akashi met with the authorities in Pale today to discuss the situation.

In a separate development, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia has announced that it will send a three-person team to Knin and Pale next week to discuss practical cooperation with the Tribunal and to obtain documentary evidence relevant to work of the Prosecutor's Office.

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Pledges worth some $154 million were made today at a meeting of the General Assembly's Ad Hoc Committee for the Announcement of Voluntary Contributions to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Those pledges will fund UNHCR programmes in 1995.

In an opening statement, General Assembly President Amara Essy (Côte d'Ivoire) said the contributions announced today would directly affect 23 million refugees and other persons who depended on the UNHCR. For the fourth year, the agency's financial requirements would exceed $1 billion. While emergency needs, such as those arising in Rwanda and the former Yugoslavia, were of great concern, support for repatriation efforts was also vital.

High Commissioner Sadako Ogata noted that the budget and staff of the UNHCR had doubled in recent years. Working in over 200 locations around the world, the agency faced enormous demands. The UNHCR Executive Committee had recently approved a general programme budget for 1995 of $415 million and noted special programme needs of $695 million. She said that the largest portion of the 1995 budget -- $127 million -- was needed for Africa, where the UNHCR assisted over 7 million refugees, returnees and internally displaced persons.

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The Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), meeting in special session in Vienna, today authorized the secretariat to act on the Security Council's request concerning inspections in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. That request was contained in a statement by the Security Council President on 4 November.

The Board welcomed the fact that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea would remain in the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and that it would comply fully with the nuclear Safeguards Agreement.

Following the Board's action, the IAEA will inform the Democratic People's Republic about the measures it deems appropriate to implement the

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safeguards and to monitor the freeze of specified facilities. The Agency's Director-General will report to the Board of Governors and to the Security Council as appropriate on its activities in that country.

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The Guatemalan Government's Commission for Peace and the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) have held a second round of talks on "Identity and rights of indigenous peoples". Meeting from 4 to 9 November in Valle de Bravo, Mexico, they exchanged views on measures to promote the recognition and development of indigenous cultures, particularly the Mayan culture, and to promote the participation of indigenous peoples in all aspects of national life.

In a statement issued after the meeting, the parties said that the issue of indigenous peoples was central to their negotiations and of historic significance for Guatemala. The eradication of discrimination and exploitation could only be achieved through a firm commitment on the part of society as a whole to the identity and rights of indigenous peoples.

The parties decided to meet again informally on 16 and 17 November as guests of the Mexican Government. They requested the moderator of the peace talks to carry out bilateral consultations to facilitate a successful outcome of the third round of talks, to be held from 27 to 30 November. They also reiterated their commitment to achieving an agreement on the identity and rights of indigenous peoples, and an agreement for a firm and lasting peace in Guatemala.

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